

Transcript

March 23, 2012

Good afternoon everybody, Attorney General Martha Coakley, joining me today is State Police Detective Lieutenant Robert Irwin, who is assigned to our office, to his left is the Special Agent in Charge of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations Bruce Foucart; to my left is Christopher Walsh who is the Bureau Chief of our Criminal Bureau, and to his left is Dean Mazzone who is the Chief of our Enterprise Crimes Division.

We are here to announce the first arrests under the new human trafficking law which took effect in Massachusetts just one month ago. These arrests are the result of a joint, month long investigation including our office, the Massachusetts State Police, US Immigration Customs Enforcement or ICE, in which is the homeland security investigations division. We worked closely also with Boston police Chelsea police, and Lynn police in this investigation. I appreciate all of the work that those agencies have done in working together.

Arrested today are four individuals. Two we allege were primary leaders of this organization. They are first Rafael Henriquez age 39, and his wife Ramona Carpio Hernandez, age 50. We also arrested two additional people who we believe and allege worked with them and oversaw locations used for this criminal enterprise used to engage in human trafficking. They are Milton Lopez-Martinez, in his 30s, and a man also in his 30s known to us only as his alias "Bombio." All four individuals are at this time charged with one count of human trafficking. They are expected to be arraigned in Chelsea and East Boston Courts on Monday morning.

This morning, State Police and Federal agents assigned and working with our office, executed search warrants at several locations in East Boston and Chelsea. The action today came about after an extensive investigation in which we had identified a sophisticated human trafficking organization and operation at those locations. We did use electronic surveillance and other methods of investigation. This is an open investigation, open and ongoing I might add, from these arrests that we have made today. The business model that we saw and that we allege in these indictments included that over a period of time in the last four weeks, we believe that between two to three women a week, in total over 12 women, some locally, some from out of state, were brought to these locations in order to provide sexual trafficking and two were at locations in East Boston and Chelsea and in one instance the business model would provide that there would be outcalls, and so one of the women would respond and travel to locations presumably dictated by the customers for this business.

We believe and part of this statute directs us to investigate and prosecute those who are treated as commodities to be exploited or sold and we allege that in this instance that these women were sold time and time again in a 24 hour period, often 14 to 15 times a day. As I mentioned, it is an active and ongoing investigation. We are continuing to gather evidence about the extent of this enterprise, both in Massachusetts and as we believe to date that many of these women were on a circuit throughout New England and other states, in this business, so it is also part of our investigation.

We believe that the new law better helps us to investigate and hold accountable those who will exploit, as in this instance, women, for profit. It has been a priority of our office for a while and

we appreciate that in this instance as we hope in the future it will be so with our office as we work with our Federal partners and our other partners in the Commonwealth. Thank you,
Special Agent in Charge:

Good afternoon, I am Bruce Foucart, Special Agent in Charge of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE, or Homeland Security Investigations or HSI here in Boston. I'm pleased to be here with Honorable Attorney General Martha Coakley and Detective Lieutenant Robert Irwin of the Mass. State Police. I would also like to recognize the Boston, Chelsea and Lynn police department for their help also in this investigation. Today, we are pleased to be a part of the investigation and arrest of four human traffickers. These individuals are now behind bars thanks to the great partnership HSI has with the Attorney General's Office and the Massachusetts State Police. We are honored and privileged that HSI played an integral part of this investigation under the new law in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Of the largest investigative component of the Department of Homeland Security, HSI has the responsibility for conducting domestic and international investigations of human trafficking that are much more common than you might think.

The greatest challenge in combatting human trafficking is victim identification. Surprisingly, many people are unaware that human trafficking occurs everyday, even in New England. As HSI places a priority on human trafficking investigations, we recognize victims of human trafficking as crime victims, so we employ a victim centered approach that places equal value on the rescue and needs of victims and the prosecution of traffickers. For example, HSI provides immigration status to individuals identified by law enforcement as victims of human trafficking. This status allows these victims to remain in the United States during the prosecution of human trafficking related crimes committed against them.

Victims of these crimes may also qualify for other forms of immigration benefits depending on their unique circumstances. Trafficking victims are eligible for T and U nonimmigrant status, which permits them to remain in the United States for up to four years and can lead to lawful permanent residence. This investigation is an example of why no one entity can adequately address the problems human trafficking presents. As such, we will continue to collaborate with our US and foreign law enforcement partners and with non-governmental organizations or NGOs through information sharing, outreach, training and investigation throughout New England. Again, I am honored that HSI played such a vital role in this investigation. Thank you.